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Kelly Nilan

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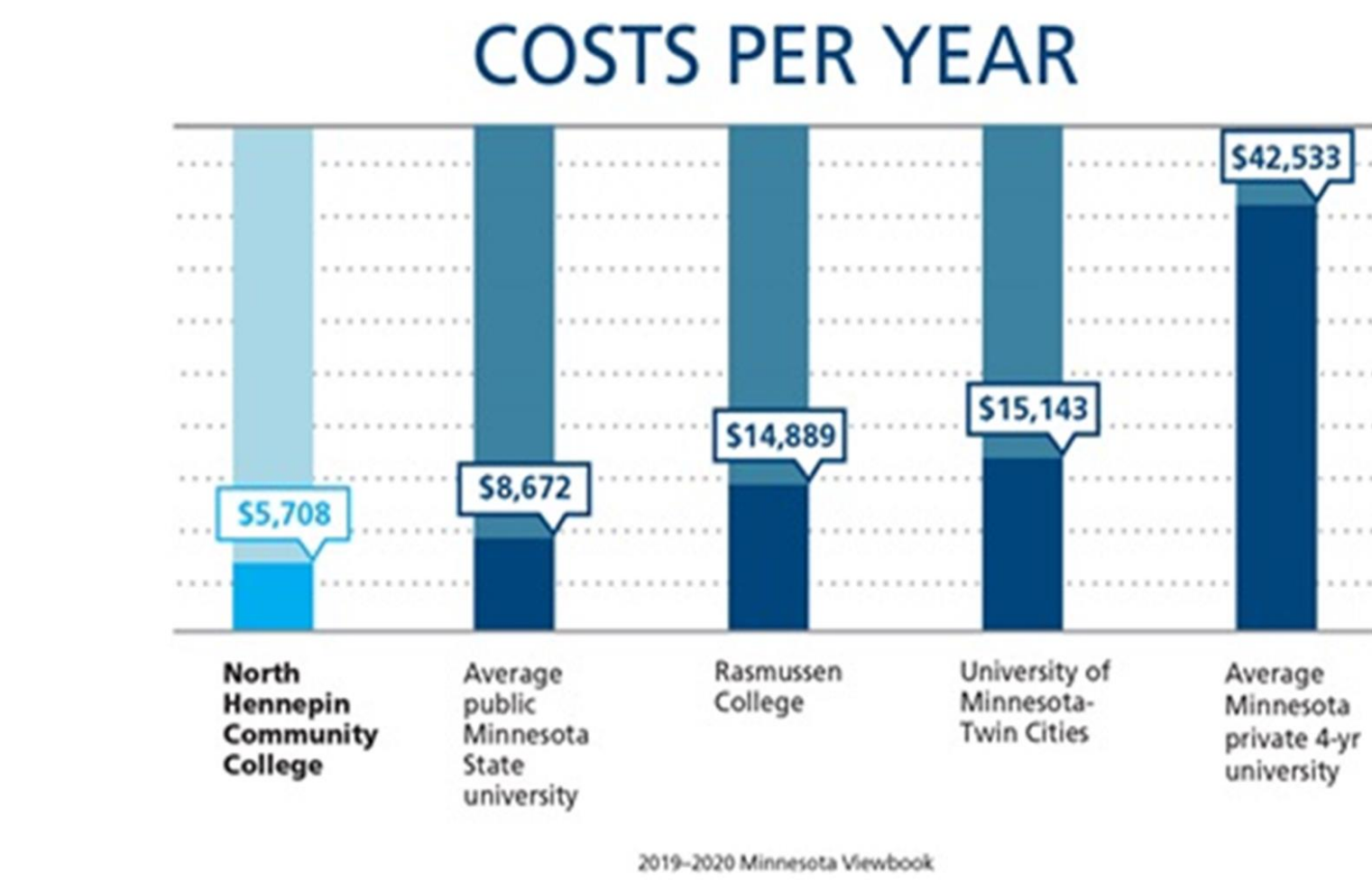
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Does Attending Community College Save You Money?

Kelly Nilan, Mentor: Stella Hofrenning PhD, Augsburg University

Introduction

Community colleges are inclusive institutions that make higher education available to students. The cost of attending a community college is much less than a four year university. The average annual tuition of a community college in 2017 was \$3,660 compared to the average annual tuition of a four year public in state college of \$10,230. Students looking to minimize education debt could save tuition cost by going to community college first. However many students do not realize that successfully transitioning from a 2 year college to a 4 year one and graduating in a timely fashion can be a challenge. Only 14% of students who enrolled in community college in the fall of 2007 seeking a bachelor’s degree actually succeeded in earning one within six years. Among those who transferred, only 42% earned a bachelor’s degree in six years compared to the 58% of students who enroll into a four-year institution as freshmen.



Data

This study uses data from Augsburg University students from the years 2009 to 20019.



Model and Assumptions

The research assumes the students in this study are full time students. Summer semesters and graduation dates other than the ends of fall and spring semester are not included in this study. This research used the data provided and calculated the average number of semesters transfer students and students that started at Augsburg spent to get their four year degree as shown in the tables below. To find the average costs, this study used a net price calculator provided by the schools to determine the average cost for each family income.

Student Data				
Type of Sudent	Avg credits transferred in	Avg semesters at Community college	Avg Semesters at Augsburg	Total Semesters
Transfer w/ Prior Degree	68.39393939	4.55959596	5.433333333	9.992929293
Transfer w/o prior degree	52.12787671	3.475191781	6.172774869	9.64796665
Traditional first Year	0	0	8.175	8.175

Results

Tuition with Aid				
FAMILY INCOME	Augsburg	Normandale	North Hennipin	Anoka Ramsey
\$0 to \$30,000	\$ 18,640.00	\$ 7,235.00	\$ 4,881.00	\$ 6,756.00
\$30,001 to \$48,000	\$ 19,225.00	\$ 7,848.00	\$ 5,947.00	\$ 7,522.00
\$48,001 to \$75,000	\$ 20,858.00	\$ 10,911.00	\$ 8,948.00	\$ 10,760.00
\$75,001 to \$110,00	\$ 25,176.00	\$ 13,926.00	\$ 11,480.00	\$ 13,027.00
\$110,000+	\$ 31,162.00	\$ 13,926.00	\$ 11,480.00	\$ 13,027.00

Augsburg Only	
Family Income	Total Cost of Tuition
\$0 to \$30,000	\$ 76,191.000
\$30,001 to \$48,000	\$ 78,582.188
\$48,001 to \$75,000	\$ 85,257.075
\$75,001 to \$110,000	\$ 102,906.900
\$110,000+	\$ 127,374.675

Overall Tuition Cost if Transferring from Normandale				
Family Income	w/ prior degree	Total Cost of Tuition	w/o prior degree	Total Cost of Tuition
\$0 to \$30,000	\$ 16,494.34	\$ 67,133.01	\$ 12,571.51	\$ 70,101.77
\$30,001 to \$48,000	\$ 17,891.85	\$ 77,227.65	\$ 13,636.65	\$ 72,972.45
\$48,001 to \$75,000	\$ 24,874.88	\$ 81,539.11	\$ 18,958.91	\$ 83,334.78
\$75,001 to \$110,000	\$ 31,748.47	\$ 100,143.27	\$ 24,197.76	\$ 101,900.65
\$110,000+	\$ 31,748.47	\$ 116,405.23	\$ 24,197.76	\$ 120,375.77

Overall Tuition Cost if Transferring from Anoka Ramsey				
Family Income	w/ prior degree	Total Cost of Tuition	w/o prior degree	Total Cost of Tuition
\$0 to \$30,000	\$ 15,402.32	\$ 66,040.96	\$ 11,739.20	\$ 69,269.46
\$30,001 to \$48,000	\$ 17,148.64	\$ 69,376.56	\$ 13,070.20	\$ 72,405.99
\$48,001 to \$75,000	\$ 24,530.63	\$ 81,194.86	\$ 18,696.53	\$ 83,072.40
\$75,001 to \$110,000	\$ 29,698.93	\$ 98,093.73	\$ 22,635.66	\$ 100,338.55
\$110,000+	\$ 29,698.93	\$ 114,355.69	\$ 22,635.66	\$ 118,813.67

Overall Tuition Cost if Transferring from North Hennepin				
Family Income	w/ prior degree	Total Cost of Tuition	w/o prior degree	Total Cost of Tuition
\$0 to \$30,000	\$ 11,127.69	\$ 61,766.36	\$ 8,481.21	\$ 66,011.47
\$30,001 to \$48,000	\$ 13,557.96	\$ 65,785.88	\$ 10,333.48	\$ 69,669.28
\$48,001 to \$75,000	\$ 20,399.63	\$ 77,069.87	\$ 15,548.01	\$ 79,923.88
\$75,001 to \$110,000	\$ 26,172.08	\$ 94,566.88	\$ 19,947.60	\$ 97,650.49
\$110,000+	\$ 26,172.08	\$ 110,828.85	\$ 19,947.60	\$ 116,125.61

Conclusion

This research’s original focus was based on the assumption that different requirements for STEM classes and difficulties in transferring classes from a community college to a four year college results in longer time to graduate and thus more money on tuition. The non-transfer STEM students took on average 8.175 semesters while non-transfer, non STEM took on average 8.223 semesters. The transfer STEM students took 9.993 semesters to complete their four year degree with a prior degree and 9.65 without a prior degree, while the non-STEM students took 9.188 semesters with a prior degree and 9.19 semesters without a prior degree. Therefore it takes about one semester longer for non- STEM and two semesters longer for STEM transfer students to graduate with a bachelor’s degree than if they entered the four-year institution from the beginning. However, as shown in the tables, it is still cheaper to attend a community college even with the two additional semesters.

Opportunity Cost

According to Burningglass, for every STEM BA graduate, there are 2.5 entry level STEM job postings, and the average entry level STEM salary is \$66,123. Therefore, if you stay the extra year, you are missing out on that \$66,123. If we take that and subtract the average amount one would be saving by first attending a community college, which is \$10,078.68, you get \$56,044.32, which means you would be, on average, benefiting \$56,044.32 from starting at a four-year institution.

Future Research

- Compare STEM and non-STEM more closely
- Examine if there is a correlation between gender or race and amount of semesters to graduate